Draft Principles for a Regional Freight Authority

It is important to set principles for a potential Regional Freight Authority¹ in order to provide a framework for the Task Force's recommendations. These principles should be mindful of the main challenges facing the regional freight system. To date, the Task Force has identified three major challenges:

- Too little funding. Budgets are tight across many transportation agencies as traditional sources of revenue have stagnated or fallen. At the same time, agencies face significant maintenance backlogs, and have multiple priorities for modernization and expansion projects. New revenues are needed to support adequate investment in the regional freight system.
- Too many jurisdictions. Northeastern Illinois is home to hundreds of jurisdictions responsible for components of the highway system. Jurisdictions' funding sources are generally tied to the components of the system for which they are responsible, complicating attempts to consider the system holistically. Additionally, various jurisdictions impose different regulations and fees on freight activity, which can lead to an inefficient patchwork across boundaries.
- Too little prioritization of freight. While existing entities do invest in projects relevant to
 goods movement, freight needs are not often explicitly addressed. And freight
 investments, on the public side, do not benefit from dedicated funding sources. No
 single agency in the region is charged with safeguarding the interests of the freight
 system.

Any Regional Freight Authority must be designed to address all three of these challenges if it is to deliver meaningful improvements. Solving only one or two of these issues will ultimately fall short of the reforms needed to sustain the region's long-term economic competitiveness and quality of life.

This document suggests five draft principles to guide the Task Force's discussion of a potential Regional Freight Authority. CMAP staff developed these draft principles based on two factors: (1) the Task Force's discussion over the course of its first four meetings and (2) the regional vision and policy recommendations included in GO TO 2040. The Task Force is asked to review these principles and revise as necessary before formally adopting them.

These principles will act as **screening criteria** in developing recommendations to the CMAP Board. Once adopted, these principles will be considered by the Task Force as **minimum requirements** that any Regional Freight Authority must meet.

¹ Note that "Regional Freight Authority" is used in this document as a placeholder for any institutional response to address regional freight issues; the Task Force could recommend that existing agencies and/or a new agency take on various functions under the principles outlined in this document.

The draft principles are the following:

- Robust freight planning. There should be a single comprehensive regional freight plan that embraces all freight modes. This plan should include a detailed list of capital improvements, as well as a list of recommended operational strategies (e.g., truck routing, off-hours delivery programs).
- <u>User-pays principle</u>. Fees raised from users of the freight system must be spent on projects that directly benefit the freight system.
- <u>Performance-based programming</u>. Freight projects must be selected for funding through a transparent, data-driven process. This is ensured by tying the selection of capital projects to the robust freight planning process described above.
- <u>Project delivery</u>. Existing implementing agencies should be responsible for arranging construction management and long-term operations and maintenance of facilities. This principle reflects GO TO 2040's preference for a Regional Freight Authority to be housed within existing agencies.
- <u>Sustained, focused advocacy</u>. The region would benefit from a single freight champion and clearinghouse for regional freight information. A Regional Freight Authority will fulfill this function, in addition to any others recommended by the Task Force.

Discussion Questions

This document suggests principles to guide the Task Force as it seeks to address the main challenges facing the regional freight system. Developing consensus on these principles is key to developing the Task Force's final recommendations to the CMAP Board.

- Are there additions or corrections to the three main challenges facing the freight system?
- Are there revisions to the five draft principles?